

Ventura County Citizens Review Panel 2015-2016 Annual Recommendations Report

County: Ventura

Contact Person for this Report:

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Local County Representative:

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CRP Meeting Minutes:

August 26, 2015, September 30, 2015, November 9, 2015, January 27, 2016, and June 1, 2016

1. County Profile (OCAP will provide current data from current annual report)
2. Panel Activities

GOAL 1. Carry out CRP functions in accordance with federal and CDSS OCAP guidelines.

A CRP panel will be established with membership comprised of volunteers with broad representation and expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect; who will also uphold confidentiality requirements; and submit reports in keeping with federal guidelines.

- 1.1 During SFY 2016-2017, the Ventura County Citizen Review Panel represented public and community-based organizations with connections to the child welfare system or families that may be involved in the system. A foster youth ambassador and former child welfare parent also participated. Twenty-eight members represented nonprofit social service agencies, education and early childhood programs, and county departments to include Ventura County School District, Ventura County Behavioral Health, Ventura County Probation Agency, and the Ventura County Human Services Agency. The local child welfare lead agency, Ventura County Human Services Agency, Children and Family Services (CFS), assisted with data presentations to support the CRP activities. The average CRP meeting attendance ranged from 17-27 members, representing a 78% participation rate.

Status: Goal Met

- 1.2 All members (100% compliance) were oriented to the CRP objectives and the federally-required confidentiality requirements. The confidentiality requirements were reviewed with the CRP membership during the 8/24/2015 meeting. In addition, all new members participated in a CRP orientation, including confidentiality agreements review. Participants for all meetings were required to read and initial their understanding and consent of the confidentiality agreement as part of the registration process.

Status: Goal Met

- 1.3 CRP quarterly meeting minutes were filed with the CDSS Office of Child Abuse Prevention, as required.

Status: Goal Met

GOAL 2. Partner with the Interagency Planning Expansion Review Committee (IPERC) to monitor group homes and residential care outcomes related to children in the foster care system in order to decrease the percent of children who emancipate or turn age 18 during the 12-month period who have been in care 3 years or more at emancipation reaching age of maturity.

In partnership with IPERC, monitor CFS outcomes to decrease the percent of children in care and the length of time children are in care prior to emancipation at the age of 18.

- 2.1 For the past several years, the Ventura County CRP partnered on developing a group home monitoring system with the Interagency Planning Expansion Review Committee (IPERC), a consortium of public agencies and group home providers. This year, per SOW, the CRP partnership focused on reviewing recommendations for a monitoring system. AB 403, Continuum of Care Reform (CCR), was enacted this year. This legislation will substantially impact group homes to include quality of services and staffing. Most of the CRP/IPERC group home monitoring activities previously recommended are now or will be embedded as part of CCR implementation activities. The CRP will review the CCR implementation activities on an ongoing basis. IPERC will continue to meet as an information and capacity building forum for group home providers. An IPERC representative agency will continue to be a CRP panel member.

Before the adoption of AB 403, CFS proposed using an adaptation of the Youth Thrive Framework to solicit the perspective of foster care youth. Youth Thrive was developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy and encourages building protective factors to buffer the effect of trauma. Is unknown to what degree CCR activities will incorporate the youth's perspective. The CRP recommends that CCR activities be monitored to ensure engagement of youth in ways that support resiliency and self-determination.

Presentations on group home services were conducted by representatives of the Ventura County Office of Education, Ventura County Special Education Local Plan Area, Ventura County Probation Agency, and Ventura County Behavioral Health. Key challenges considered include:

- Need for identification and engagement of education surrogates to represent the family at IEP meetings.
- Impact of transportation cost considerations that may emerge with transportation of foster children to their school of origin. Under the Foster Youth School Program, transportation cost to transport foster youth to home schools is no longer a covered service.
- Increase in the number of foster youth committing crimes, despite significant reduction in juvenile probation cases; 2,400 cases in 2012 as compared to 887 cases in 2015.
- Slow implementation of Katie A. requirements to provide mental health screening for all children entered into care. All children entered into care are referred for a mental health screening. In 2015, 100 children entering the child welfare system were screened for mental health concerns (60 newly detained and 40 previously detained).

Per the SOW, the CRP discussed local implementation of CCR in depth during the 8/26/2015, 9/30/2015, and 9/1/2016 meetings, with updates presented as part of the 11/9/2015 and 1/27/2016 meetings. In addition, the CRP facilitator attended IPERC meetings and participated in CFS group home quality monitoring meetings for coordination purposes.

Status: Goal Met

2.2 The CRP reviewed the 2015 time-in-care data during the 8/26/2015 and 6/1/2016 meetings (semi-annual) as required by the SOW. Most indicators show improvement or improving trends to include:

- Declining trend (31.6% to 29%) for first placement in group homes
- Over an 11% increase in kinship care first-entries (19.3% to 31%)
- Approximately a 5% increase in permanency for foster care youth in placement 12-23 months (45.6% to 50.5%)
- Over a 10% increase in permanency rates for children in care over 24 months (29.8% to 40.6%)
- Reduction of the number of children in long-term foster care (3 years+) from 23 children to 14 children

In 2015, Ventura County reported declining numbers of children reunified with parents within the first 12 months (from 38% to 33.1%). Ventura County CFS personnel report that reunification trends are influenced by a focus on permanency versus reunification. Ventura County has higher numbers of

children in guardianship as a way to achieve permanency (5-7% above the target). During 2015, the Emergency Shelter was closed with placements now made primarily with kinship or resource families. Also concerning is the rising trend for child re-entry into the child welfare system (3.6% increase in 2015).

Status: Goal Met

Recommendations:

1. The Ventura County CRP monitor data, trends, and CCR implementation for children in care, with specific focus on 1) time and stability of placement(s), 2) probation trends including crimes committed by foster youth, 3) reentry into care trends, and 4) access to mental health screenings.
2. The Ventura County CFS monitor trends and recommend strategies to examine practices so that an educational surrogate, if needed, is available for foster youth with special education needs..
3. CDSS explore the use of resiliency-based frameworks to gather the perspectives of foster youth in group homes. This information can inform local and statewide CCR practices.

GOAL 3. Review, advise, and monitor recommended child welfare data variables, strategies, and outcomes used to monitor child welfare outcomes as part of Ventura County's CFS reporting process. Ensure a family-strengthening approach is incorporated as part of CFS reporting language and family engagement strategies. Ensure child welfare benchmarks reported to the public are useful, accessible, and incorporate a strengths-based approach.

- 3.1 Review and advise on child welfare variables used to track and report child safety, permanence, child wellbeing and a strengths-based approach on the to-be-developed CFS Scorecard.
- 3.2 Review and advise on strategies to improve CFS family engagement using protective factors.
- 3.3 Identify and monitor child welfare outcomes identified for tracking. Make recommendations for systems improvement as indicated.
- 3.4 Review and advise on public access and usefulness of CFS public reports for the community. Make recommendations for systems improvement as indicated.

- 3.1 This fiscal year, the CRP continued to review and monitor the data reporting tool in development by CFS. The *Children and Family Services Principles and Outcomes Dashboard* (aka Dashboard) takes the place of the prior data

collection prototype called CFS Scorecard. The CRP reviewed a final version of the Dashboard, designed to track key performance measures on a quarterly basis over one calendar year. Each performance measure was compared to 1) the prior year Ventura County performance and 2) a federal, state, or local comparison target variable. A visual inspection of the quarterly data was aided with icons indicating 1) meeting or exceeding targets (check-mark), 2) below but trending near target (triangle), or 3) trending below target (octagon). Three of the 18 variables tracked were System Improvement Plan (SIP) Outcome measures (*decreased rate of placement moves, increased unification in 12 months, and decreased reentry into foster care*).

The CRP noted that the new list of performance measures provided robust information on aggregated placement stability, shelter usage, and permanency outcomes. Quality of care and child and family wellbeing appeared more challenging measures to track. It was discussed that child and family wellbeing may be context specific, therefore a data review at the case or neighborhood level might prove more useful.

Status: Goal Met

3.2 The CRP reviewed value statements that were developed by CFS staff to identify the agency's foundational principles. The CRP members concurred that the value statements clearly articulated a family centered and protective factor frame of reference. Performance variables identified on the Dashboard were also framed around these values. The value statements were:

- Safe at Home: We believe families can keep their children safe with support.
- Caregiving: We believe children should be cared for in a familiar, nurturing, and safe environment.
- Child's Experience: We believe every child is entitled to thrive through stability (health, education, and placement), family connections, quality treatment, and a voice in planning.
- Parental Support for Reunification: We believe, through partnership and support, parents can grow and change in order to safely parent their children.
- Permanency: We believe all children deserve a sense of belonging, and permanent and unconditional commitment in a lifelong family.

Status: Goal Met

3.3. The CRP reviewed the 2015 child welfare performance data presented on the Dashboard. Of the 18 performance measures identified, 15 had data for all four quarters. Ten of the 15 measures (66%) showed improvement over the course of the year and/or at year-end ('meeting target' or 'below but near target'). Several

of the performance measures were ranked in the '*trending below target*' range. In discussions, the reason for poorer performance on these variables appeared related to challenges with reunification (see 2.2). Other under-performing measures included '*increased % of siblings placed together*' and '*increased % of children placed within 10 miles of home of origin*'. The CRP will continue to monitor all Dashboard performance measures.

The Dashboard aggregates outcomes for all children. In addition to the Dashboard measures, the CRP recommended continued monitoring of the child welfare outcomes for those children disproportionately represented in the system to include Latino children and children birth-to-five years of age.

Status: Goal Met

- 3.4. It is recommended that the Dashboard visual display be simplified, especially if the information will be made available to the public. CRP recommendations included inclusion of the total number of children in the child welfare system (in addition to percentages), tracking of Latino and young children, numbering the performance variables for discussion purposes, simplifying the 'comparison target' descriptors, and creating a visual distinction between cells that identify targets versus quarterly data.

The CRP disseminated information to the public via the Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) representative, the Partnership for Safe Families and Communities. The CRP also recommended that CFS consider making the Dashboard available for public review.

Status: Goal Met

Recommendations:

4. Ventura County CFS continue to use and refine the *Children & Family Service Principles and Outcomes Dashboard*. The Ventura County CFS should consider the visual display, data additions, and clarification recommendations made by the CRP to refine the Dashboard and visual display of data.
5. Ventura County CFS visually display and track trends for those populations disproportionately represented in the Ventura County child welfare system, to include Latino children and children birth to 5 years of age. This information will be monitored by the Ventura County CRP.
6. Ventura County CFS facilitate posting of the CRP 2015-2016 Annual Report on the website of the Ventura County Partnership for Safe Families and Communities (regional Child Abuse Prevention Council) and on the Ventura County Human Services Agency website. All comments regarding

the report will be reviewed by the CRP and will be taken into consideration when determining future activities and recommendations

7. CDSS explore the development of a data Dashboard template to describe trends and outcomes for key child welfare performance measures in other California counties per Ventura County's example. Child welfare value statements should be included.